
Mapping Out China's Online Public Diplomacy

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Presentation Outline

- The notion of **public diplomacy**
- Digital technologies and public diplomacy
- China's public diplomacy strategies online
 - **Relationship** between actors
 - **Content** of public diplomacy messages
 - **Interaction** between publics and public diplomacy actors
- Evaluation of China's current public diplomacy efforts online

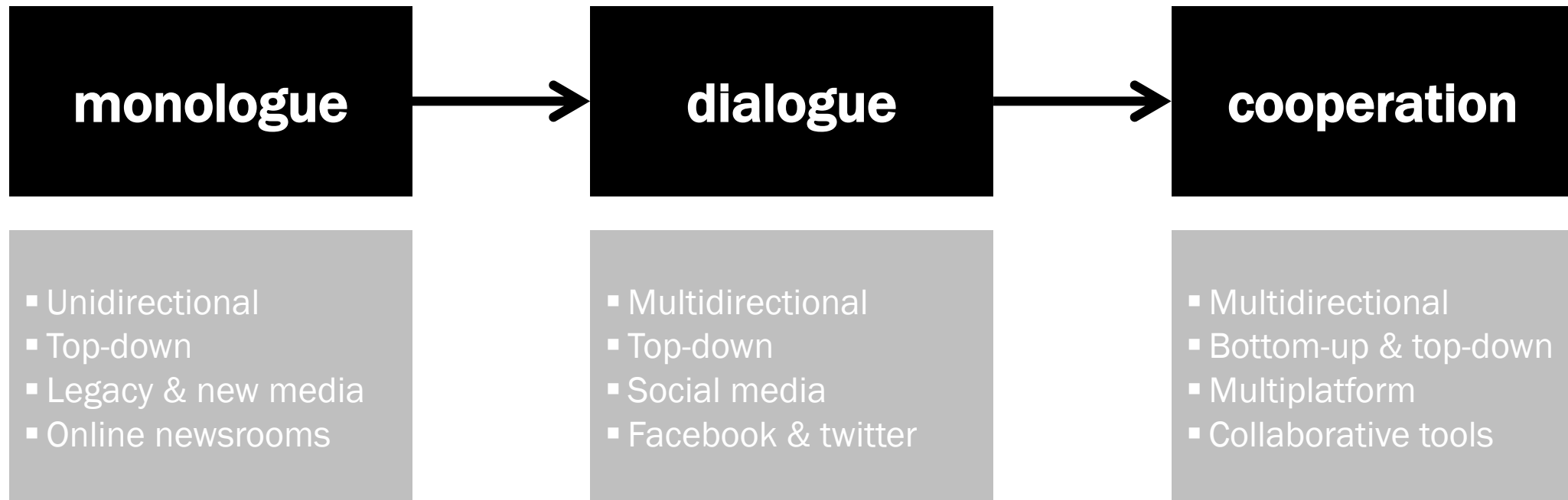
Public diplomacy

- “A government’s process of communication with **foreign publics** in an attempt to **bring about understanding** for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies” (Tuch, 1990, p. 3).
- “Activities directed abroad in the **fields of information, education, and culture**, whose objective is **to influence** a foreign government, by influencing its citizens” (Frederick, 1993, p. 229).

Online (or digital) public diplomacy

- The advent of digital communication technologies not only has provided new platforms to communicate through, but opened a space for **new forms of outreach and engagement**.
- Moving public diplomacy online has created challenges that most nation states have been unable to address to date:
 - A lowering of entrance barriers (technological and economic) has **multiplied the number of messengers**.
 - Information overload has created a **cacophony of voices** that makes listening and advocacy more difficult than before.
 - Audiences now **transcend the borders of nation states**, requiring new regional and/or global strategies.

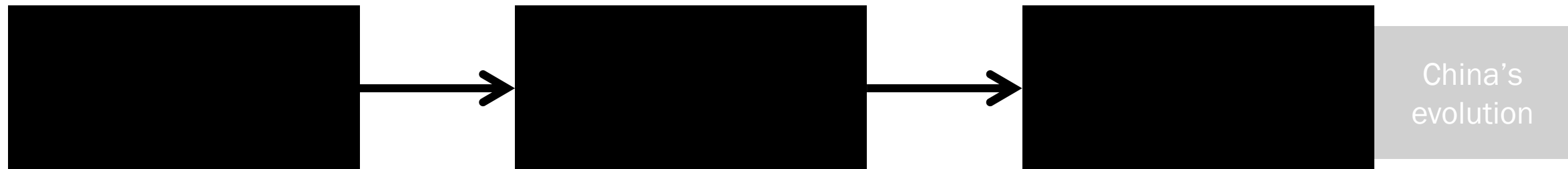
Layers of public diplomacy



China's public diplomacy

- For decades public diplomacy has been at the **core of China's foreign policy**, and more recently officially tied to the harnessing of “soft power.”
- There are multiple actors involved in China's public diplomacy and their relationship is often obscure and complex.
 - The main actors are **diplomatic missions** and **State media** (CGTN, CRI...)
 - There are also other smaller media organizations and some state agencies (Hanban, State Council...) involved in outreach activities.
- China's public diplomacy has traditionally been **top-down** and communication **unidirectional**.

Layers of public diplomacy



Research questions

- RQ1: How are actors involved in China's public diplomacy linked on the web?
- RQ2: What topics do Chinese embassies address on their English-language websites?
- RQ3: What is the nature of interactions on social media between the public and Chinese public diplomacy actors?
- RQ4: Which layer of public diplomacy (monologue, dialogue or collaboration) prevails in China's activities online?

Data

- **Dataset #1** – Embassies' Websites [n = 160]
 - Network of links on homepages
 - All html pages [N = 88,144] on a sub-sample of embassies [n = 66]
- **Dataset #2** – Social Media Accounts of Chinese PD actors [n = 130]
 - Facebook comments on posts and replies to comments [n = 1,717,728]

Data collection & Analysis

- **RQ₁ – network analysis**

- WinHTTrack to scrape webpages
- Bipartite R package to draw a two-mode weighted network
- Descriptive network measures

- **RQ₂ – topic modelling**

- Topicmodels R package to fit an LDA model
- Frequency analysis and descriptive statistics

- **RQ₃ – descriptive**

- FacebookR and twitterR R packages to download data
- Frequency analysis and descriptive statistics

RQ₁

How are actors involved in China's public diplomacy linked on the web?

Figure 1. Bipartite network graph of links between selected Chinese embassies (n = 20) and other public diplomacy actors' websites

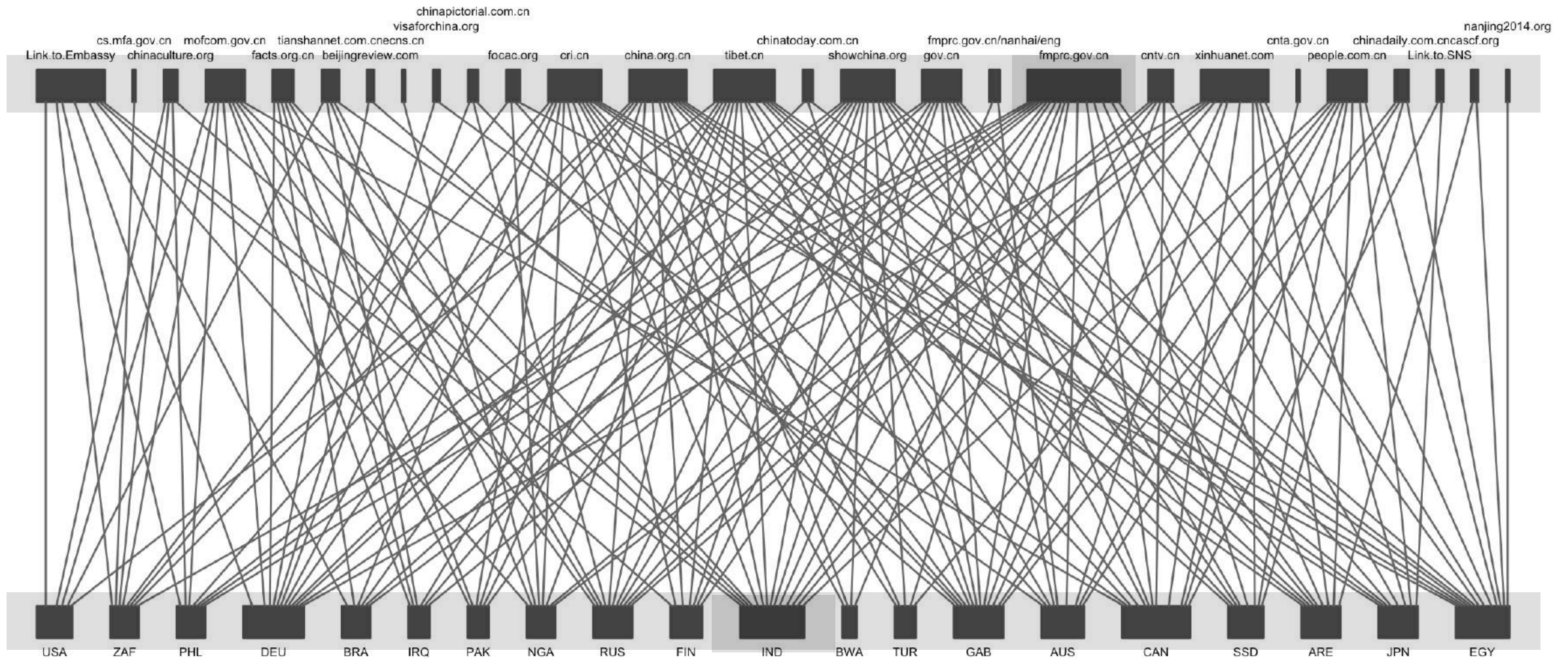


Table 1. Degree, betweenness and closeness for focal nodes in bipartite network of hyperlinks from embassies to other public diplomacy actors (selection, degree > 2)

URL	degree	betweenness	closeness
www.fmprc.gov.cn	131	0,101607864	0,020545845
www.cri.cn	125	0,074265185	0,019779209
www.china.org.cn	123	0,076469149	0,019779209
www.showchina.org	112	0,086764813	0,020085863
www.gov.cn	89	0,066207901	0,019472554
www.tibet.cn	84	0,068900997	0,019472554
www.xinhuanet.com	82	0,087612725	0,020085863
www.people.com.cn	63	0,061921086	0,019319227
www.mofcom.gov.cn	60	0,067771372	0,019472554
www.facts.org.cn	34	0,035591055	0,018245937
www.tianshannet.com.cn	31	0,027086818	0,017325974

RQ₂

What topics do Chinese embassies address on their English-language websites?

Figure 2. β values for top ten terms per topic in LDA Model ($k = 6$)

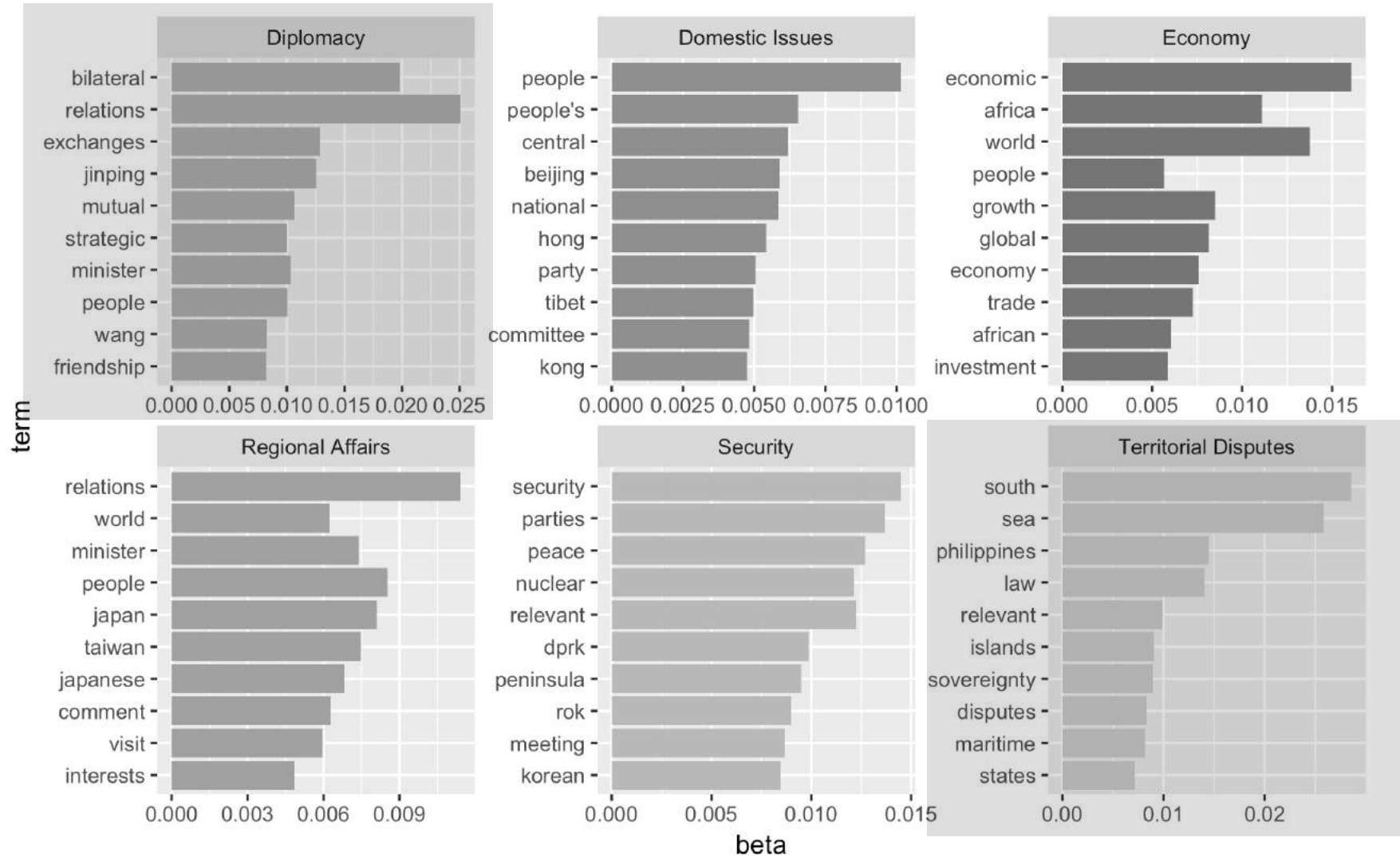


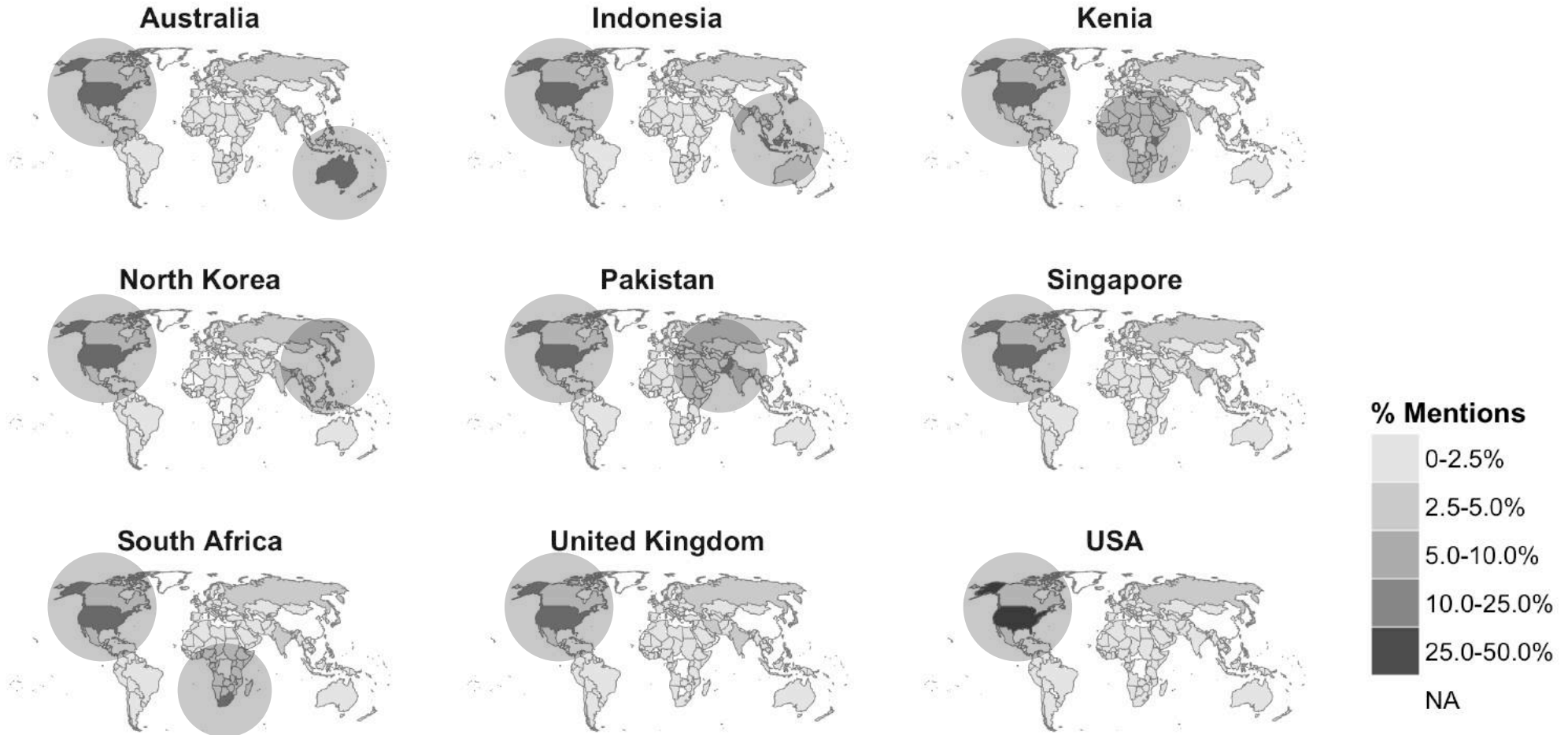
Table 3. Most frequently occurring topics on embassy websites

Topic	Full sample N = 82,335	P(A) > .5 n = 26,509
Diplomacy	31%	38%
Domestic issues	19%	19%
Regional affairs	16%	9%
Security	14%	13%
Economy	13%	14%
Territorial disputes	7%	7%

Table 4. Most frequent topics on selected embassies' websites

Embassy	Topic	% of items
Albania	Diplomacy	63%
Australia	Domestic	37%
Azerbaijan	Security	39%
Ethiopia	Domestic	26%
Nigeria	Diplomacy	60%
North Korea	Security	38%
South Africa	Economy	32%
Somalia	Regional Affairs	39%
United Kingdom	Domestic	47%
USA	Domestic	41%
Vietnam	Regional Affairs	43%

Figure 4. Most frequently mentioned countries/regions in selected embassy websites



RQ₃

What is the nature of interactions on social media between the public and Chinese public diplomacy actors?

Figure 5. Evolution of audience participation and interaction on Chinese public diplomacy Facebook accounts

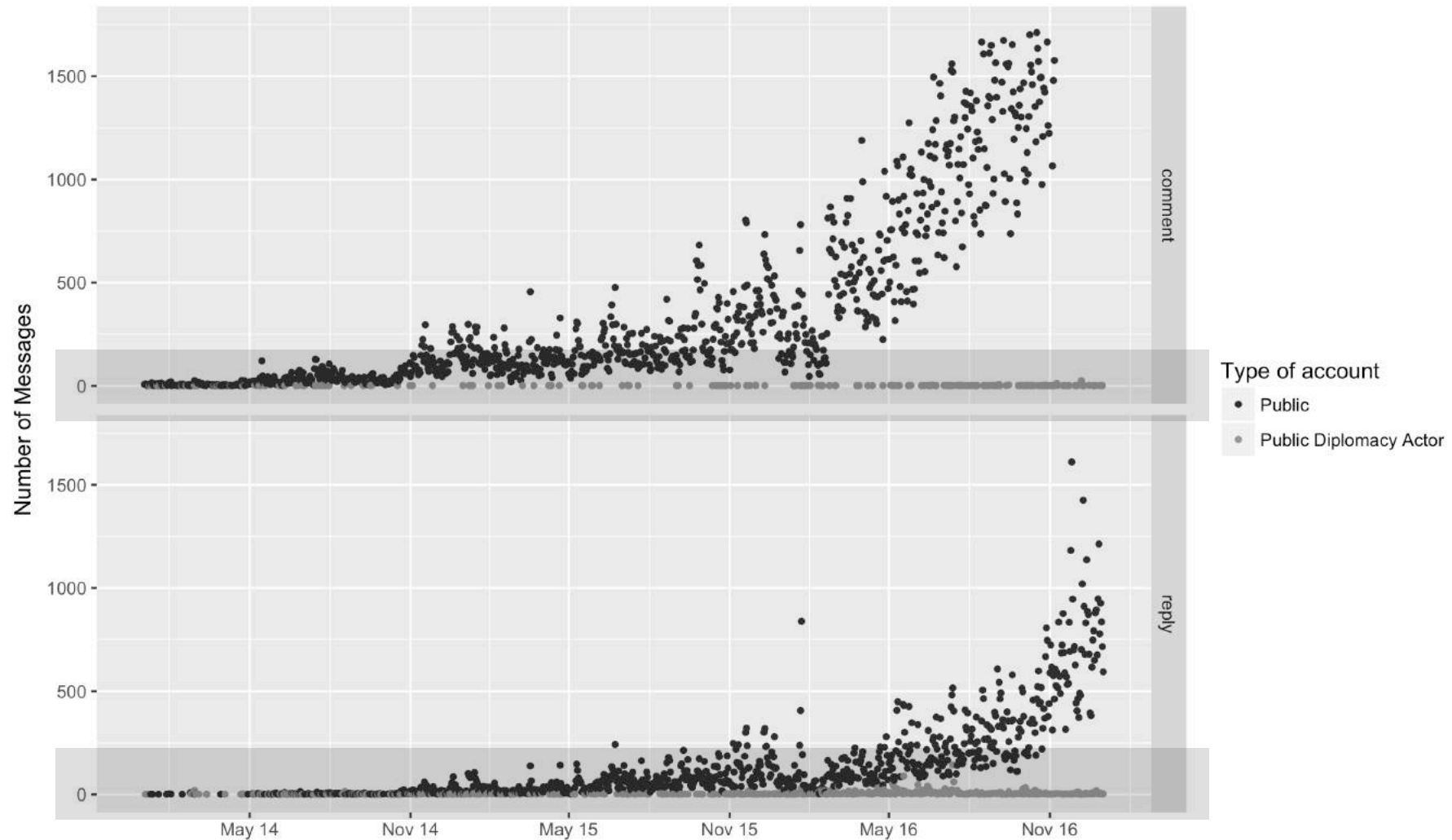


Figure 6. Frequency of interactions on Facebook by selected public diplomacy actors' accounts (n = 35)

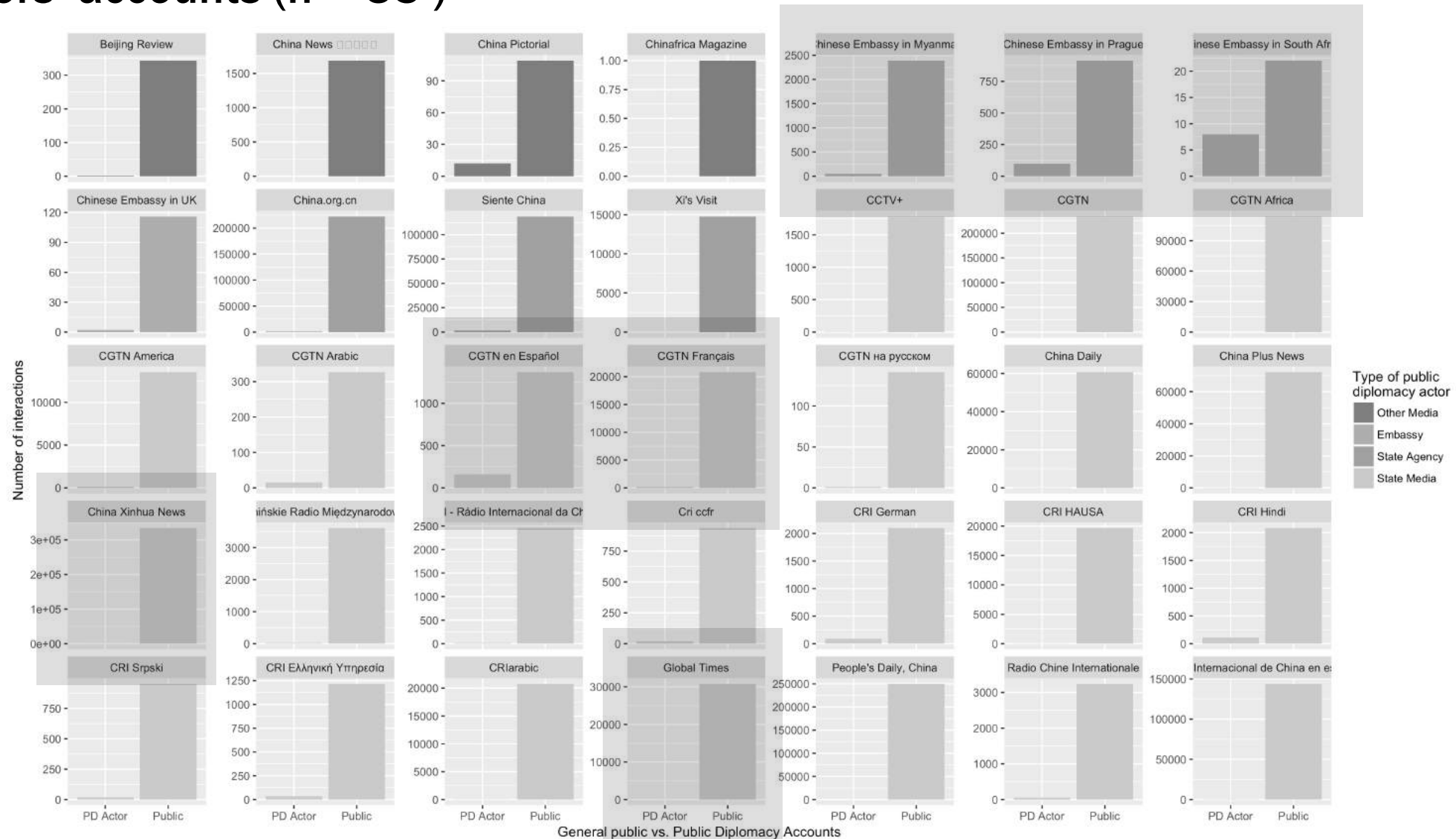


Table 6. Ratio between messages by the public and responses on Facebook

Actor	Ratio	Messages	Responses
Embassy in South Africa	0.364	22	8
Embassy in Prague	0.107	913	98
Embassies (n = 4)	M = 0.127		
CGTN Español	0.118	1367	161
People's Daily, China	0	249620	0
State Media (n = 32)	M = 0.017		
China.org.cn	0.004	222201	969
Siente China	0.011	118660	1351
State Agency (n = 8)	M = 0.005		
<i>China Pictorial</i>	0.110	109	12
<i>Beijing Review</i>	0.006	343	2
Other Media (n = 5)	M = 0.157		

RQ₄

Which layer of public diplomacy (monologue, dialogue or collaboration) prevails in China's activities online?

Digital Public diplomacy

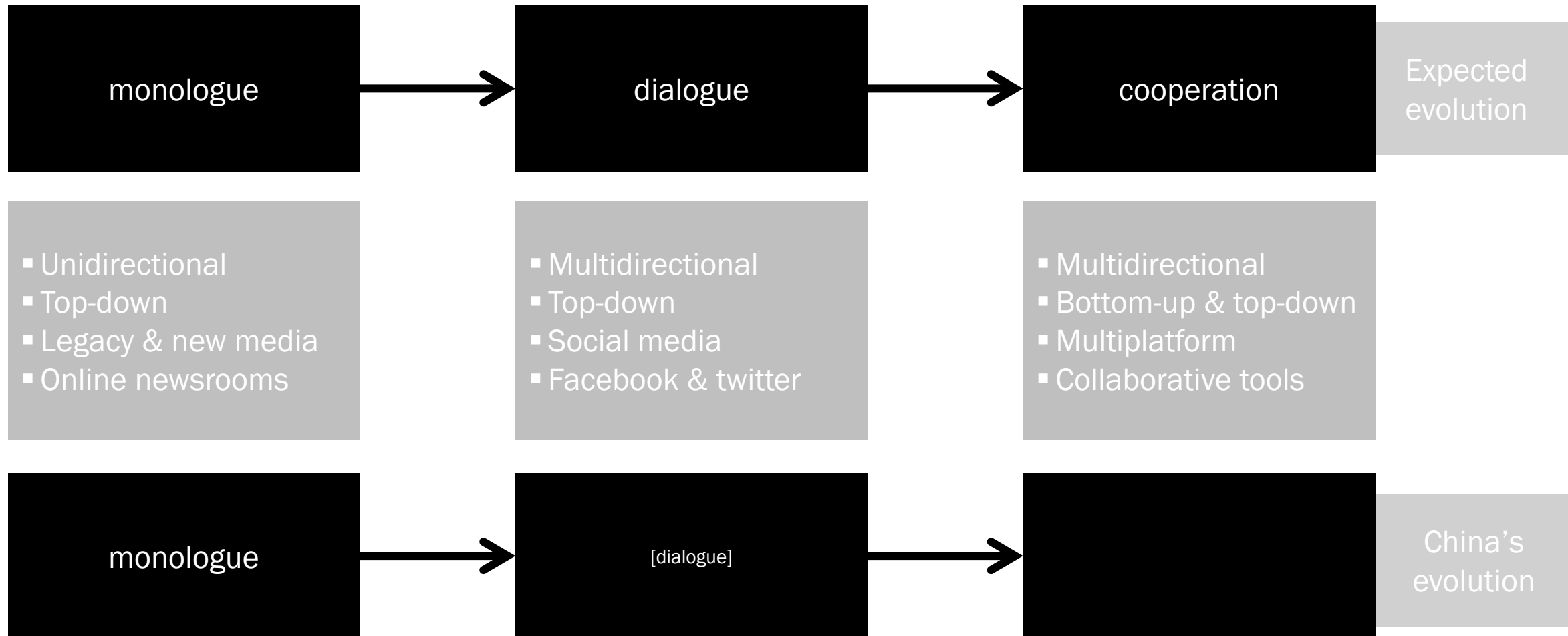


Table 7. Actors and actions in China's digital public diplomacy

	Diplomatic Missions	State-Owned Media	Other Media	State Agencies
Listening	Some	Low	None	Low
Advocacy	High	High	High	High
Cultural diplomacy	--	Some	--	Some
Exchange diplomacy	--	--	--	--
International broadcasting	--	High	High	--

Conclusion

- There is a certain **randomness** to China's online public diplomacy actions that seems to be a consequence of the absence of a **unified/clear strategy**.
- Monologic forms of communication are predominant, but some actors appear to be using social media platforms moderately as a form of interaction with foreign publics.
- A **top-down approach** to communication is still predominant, where peddling State-sanctioned information on sensitive topics is the norm.

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